

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) A magnetoresistive head comprising a magnetoresistive layer which converts magnetic signals to electric signals, a pair of electrodes for allowing an electrically sensing current to flow across said magnetoresistive layer, upper and under gap layers placed over and beneath said pair of electrodes and said magnetoresistive layer, and upper and under shield layers, one of which is placed over said upper gap layer and the other is placed beneath said under gap layer, wherein at least either of said upper and under gap layers is made of varistor material so that electrostatic breakdown of the magnetoresistive layer is prevented.

3-4 (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The magnetoresistive head according to claim 2, wherein said magnetoresistive head employs a material consisting of ZnO, SiC, BaTiO, Si, or SrTiO films or films whose main element is one of these substances as said varistor material.

6-7 (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) The magnetoresistive head according to claim 2, wherein said magnetoresistive head employs a material which exhibits varistor characteristics and is a multi layered structure made up of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂, HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ films or oxide films whose main element is one of these substances in combination with films selected from among ZnO, SiC, BaTiO, Si, and SrTiO films as the above varistor material.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Presented) A magnetoresistive head,

comprising a magnetoresistive layer which converts magnetic signals to electric signals, a pair of electrodes for allowing an electrically sensing current to flow across said magnetoresistive layer, upper and under gap layers placed over and beneath said pair of electrodes and said magnetoresistive layer, and upper and under shield layers, one of which is placed over said upper gap layer and the other is placed beneath said under gap layer, wherein said pair of electrodes and at least either of said upper and under shield layers are electrically connected by varistor material that also interconnects said pair of electrodes;

wherein said magnetoresistive head employs a material which exhibits varistor characteristics and is multi layered structure made up of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂, HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ films or oxide films whose main element is one of these substances in combination with films selected from among ZnO, SiC, BaTiO, Si, and SrTiO films as the above varistor material; and

wherein said material is formed in a multi-layer wherein the thickness of a film made of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂, HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ or an oxide film whose main element is one of these substances is 5 nm or less.

11. (Currently Amended) A magnetoresistive head comprising a magnetoresistive layer which converts magnetic signals to electric signals, a pair of electrodes for allowing an electrically sensing current to flow across said magnetoresistive layer, upper and under gap layers placed over and beneath said pair of electrodes and said magnetoresistive layer, and upper and under shield layers, one of which placed over said upper gap layer and the other placed beneath said under gap layer, wherein at least either of said upper and under gap layers is made of varistor material;

wherein said magnetoresistive head employs a material which exhibits varistor characteristics and is multi layered structure made up of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂, HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ films or oxide films whose main element is one of these substances in combination with films selected from among ZnO, SiC, BaTiO, Si, and SrTiO films as the above varistor material; and

~~a magnetoresistive head~~ wherein said material is formed in a multi-layer wherein the thickness of a film made of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂,

HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ or an oxide film whose main element is one of these substances is 5 nm or less.

12. (Previously Presented) A magnetoresistive head, comprising a magnetoresistive layer which converts magnetic signals to electric signals, a pair of electrodes for allowing an electrically sensing current to flow across said magnetoresistive layer, upper and under gap layers placed over and beneath said pair of electrodes and said magnetoresistive layer, and upper and under shield layers, one of which is placed over said upper gap layer and the other is placed beneath said under gap layer, wherein leads of said upper and under shield layers and leads extended out of lead terminals of said electrodes are connected by varistor material on the side where a magnetoresistive element does not exist, when viewed from the lead terminals of said pair of electrodes;

wherein said magnetoresistive head employs a material which exhibits varistor characteristics and is multi layered structure made up of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂, HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ films or oxide films whose main element is one of these substances in combination with films selected from among ZnO, SiC, BaTiO, Si, and SrTiO films as the above varistor material; and

wherein said material is formed in a multi-layer wherein the thickness of a film made of Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Bi₂O₅, MnO, NiO, CoO, Fe-O, TiO₂, HfO₂, ZrO₂, or Nb₂O₅ or an oxide film whose main element is one of these substances is 5 nm or less.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously Presented) A magnetic head assembly comprising the magnetoresistive head according to claim 2 in combination with an inductive thin-film head.

15-16 (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) A magnetic read/write device with the magnetic head assembly according to claim 14 installed thereon.

18. (Cancelled)